



The Difficulties Faced by English Language Teachers in Teaching Vocabulary to Primary School Students in Alkhoms City: A Field Study

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الصعوبات التي تواجه معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في تدريس المفردات لطلاب المرحلة الابتدائية بمدينة الخمس: دراسة ميدانية

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Abstract

The objectives of the study are to investigate the difficulties that faced by English teachers in teaching vocabulary to young learners at Primary schools in Alkhoms city, and find out the reasons behind the difficulties that faced by teachers in teaching vocabulary to young learners at Primary schools in Alkhoms city. The method of the research was quantitative which obtain the data through questionnaire. The participants of this study were 50 teachers at primary schools. The analysis method used to analysis the data is statistical methods which are frequency and percentage. The results of the study showed that the teachers face problems in teaching English vocabulary, and they do not use effective strategies and techniques to aid the students to learn vocabulary; they do not use pictures such as posters, flashcards or wall charts to make the meaning of unknown word, they do not use enumerated technique to explain difficult words, and they do not use any electronic devices such as computers, data show, CD player or other devices. They just translate the meaning of new words in Arabic, and give the students a list of words to memorize them. The teachers face difficulty in telling our students to memorize vocabulary because some students are lazy and the students are not active and confident. Moreover, the teachers face difficulties in teaching vocabulary because of the time constraints of the class. The study was concluded with conclusion and some recommendations and suggestions for teachers, students and other researchers.

Keywords: vocabulary, difficulty, teacher.

المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء الصعوبات التي يواجهها معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية في تدريس المفردات لطلاب المرحلة الابتدائية في مدينة الخمس، والكشف عن أسباب هذه الصعوبات. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الكمي، حيث جُمعت البيانات من خلال استبيان. وشارك فيها 50 معلمًا من مدارس ابتدائية. وتم تحليل البيانات إحصائيًا باستخدام التكرار والنسبة المئوية.

أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن المعلمين يواجهون صعوبات في تدريس مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية، فهم لا يستخدمون استراتيجيات وأساليب فعّالة لمساعدة الطلاب على تعلم المفردات؛ إذ لا يستخدمون الصور، كالمصققات والبطاقات التعليمية واللوحات الجدارية، لتوضيح معاني الكلمات غير المألوفة، ولا يستخدمون أسلوب التعداد لشرح الكلمات الصعبة، كما لا يستخدمون أي أجهزة إلكترونية كالحواسيب أو شاشات العرض أو مشغلات الأقراص المدمجة أو غيرها. ويكتفون بترجمة معاني الكلمات الجديدة إلى اللغة العربية، وإعطاء الطلاب قائمة بالكلمات لحفظها. يواجه المعلمون صعوبة في حث الطلاب على حفظ المفردات، نظرًا لكسل بعض الطلاب وقلة نشاطهم وثقتهم بأنفسهم. إضافةً إلى ذلك، يواجه المعلمون صعوبات في تدريس المفردات بسبب ضيق وقت الحصة. اختتمت الدراسة بنتائج وتوصيات واقتراحات للمعلمين والطلاب والباحثين الآخرين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المفردات، الصعوبة، المعلم.

Introduction

When teaching English as a foreign language, all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are addressed. To learn these skills, the students must develop an extensive vocabulary in English. In other words, if they have a large vocabulary, it will be easy for them to comprehend reading material, write in English, and communicate in English. Liando et al. (2019) stated that vocabulary can be viewed as a crucial element in the development of the four language skills. Language acquisition requires learning vocabulary. It should be regarded as a crucial element in language training from the start in order to develop such skills successfully. Students will be able to communicate in any language if they have a solid grasp of vocabulary because they will be able to swiftly and accurately determine the meaning of the majority of words. On the other side, vocabulary mastery enables the ability to speak English and a strong desire to read simple English books. It may be argued that vocabulary mastery is a great place to start learning English (Liando et al., 2019).

In the process of vocabulary teaching, there can be challenges or difficulties. Amir Yousef and Dastjerdi (2010) claimed that one should consider what it means to comprehend a word as well as how to teach one. They showed that although students, particularly low-level students, are frequently disappointed when new vocabulary, inferring meaning from context does not actually result in long-term retention. Teachers found it challenging to teach language due to a number of reasons. Selviana (2021) indicated that teaching vocabulary may be difficult because many teachers lack confidence in the most effective methods and frequently do not have an idea how to create an instructional focus on word learning. The teachers would not solve the problem as the teaching and learning process progressed. They struggle with finding effective teaching strategies that will help students learn. Teachers should be concerned that students find teaching vocabulary to be a novel and foreign subject. Additionally, they need to think about how teaching English to children differs from teaching it to adults.

Statement of problem

The components of teaching vocabulary are rarely the focus of teacher. One aspect of learning English that students should pay close attention to is vocabulary.

Vocabulary helps to strengthen each of the four language skills –listening, speaking, reading and writing. If they do not have a large enough vocabulary, they cannot use those four skills. Second, a lot of teachers organize the need of including language instruction in their curricula, textbooks, and classrooms. The English curriculum and textbooks do not offer enough resources for vocabulary development. Teachers seldom ever teach the young learners vocabulary because of the many difficulties they face when doing so in English. Thus, this study tries to investigate the difficulties that teachers face in teaching vocabulary to young learners at Primary schools in Alkhoms city.

Literature Review

Definition of vocabulary

Susanne Flohr (2008) states

Vocabulary can basically be defined "as the words we teach in the foreign language" which the teacher has to introduce and explain to the students. One needs to be aware of the fact that new vocabulary does not mean that only one new word is being introduced to the students because often multi- word idioms or single ideas which consist of more than one word are introduced. Therefore, "a useful convention is to cover all such cases by talking about vocabulary items rather than 'words'." The teacher needs to present the vocabulary in a way that students can easily understand how to use the new words. In addition to that, the learner's individual strategies for learning and using vocabulary need to be taken into consideration. (P.3)

Importance of Vocabulary

Students, particularly those in primary schools, must know vocabulary as a part of language in order to master the four language skills when learning English. Without words, nothing can be communicated, based on Thornburry's (2002) discussion. It implies that someone is able to speak English, even if their use of grammar is limited since their use of important terms makes them understandable. On the other hand, if a person lacks vocabulary, it indicates poor communication. Additionally, Rivers (2018) demonstrated how developing a sufficient vocabulary is crucial for successfully using a second language since without a wide vocabulary, we will be unable to employ the structures and functions we may have learned for understandable communication.

Moreover, Richards and Rodger (2014) stated that in order to understand, vocabulary is a crucial element. It means that in order to understand the message, one must be familiar with the language since, otherwise, understanding the message will be challenging. Finally, as reported by Folse (2004), vocabulary is important in intellectual, professional, and social life. Because vocabulary is required for communication, it follows that vocabulary is useful in social situations.

Role of the Teacher

A teacher is a person who supports or instructs learning. He or she is the one who can teach students information that will help them develop, recognize, and acquire the abilities they need to overcome problems in life. A teacher is someone who gives lessons to students, typically in a classroom. The teacher is frequently regarded as the most crucial person in every educational system. In line with Harmer (2007), a teacher must play six different roles to effectively lead a class: controller, assessor, organizer, prompter, participant, and resource. A teacher's six roles in managing a class during the teaching and learning process are facilitator, manager, demonstrator, guide, and motivator. In addition, the teacher serves as a source of learning. Additionally, effective classroom management can help students feel less stressed. In the classroom, teachers can also improve their own and the student's self- management and learning skills.

based on the fact that every teacher needs a teacher who can manage a classroom. A teacher's job is to inspire students to overcome any obstacle they encounter while learning. Learning is a two-way street; students should receive feedback to evaluate their development. The instructor should improve the students' communication skills and create a welcoming environment in order to motivate them to study more and help them along the way (Kannan, 2009)

Difficulties in Teaching Vocabulary

There may be difficulties, challenges, or hurdles in the practice of teaching language. In her study of vocabulary teaching, Cárdenas (2001) attempted to examine a number of problems, including the inability to recognize incorrect vocabulary that has been taught, the use of

vocabulary for no apparent purpose, improper use of dictionaries, incorrect use of grammatical forms, spelling, pronunciation, or stress, and improper use of dictionaries. The number of words to teach, the words to teach specifically, the vocabulary acquisition of two groups of students, and the significance of independent reading in vocabulary learning were recognized by Hiebert and Kamil (2005) as the four main problems in teaching vocabulary.

Sedita (2005) attempted to draw attention to a few difficulties encountered by English teachers while attempting to assist students in developing acceptable vocabulary in the classroom. When students lacked vocabulary knowledge, struggled with reading and learning, did not read outside of class, or had little to no command of the English language, problems tended to occur. She advised instructors to find new approaches to teaching vocabulary and to use technology to aid in their efforts. Amiryousefi and Dastjerdi (2010) contend that one should consider what it means to understand a term and how to teach it. They showed that low-level students are commonly demotivated when acquiring vocabulary because doing so does not actually produce long-term recall.

Previous Studies

A study by Astatia (2019) aimed to investigate the difficulties faced by the English teachers in teaching vocabulary, find out the factors that cause these difficulties in teaching vocabulary and discover what efforts that English teachers do toward teaching vocabulary problems. Six English teachers took part in the discussion. A descriptive qualitative research methodology was used for this study. Data were gathered for the study through observation and interviews. The findings showed that the challenges faced by the teachers in teaching vocabulary included developing and choosing English materials that were appropriate to the curriculum, explaining vocabulary materials to students, and evaluating assessments of the teaching process and outcomes. The fact that so many students had not taken English in elementary school was the main reason for the difficulties in planning and choosing English materials that were suited to the curriculum. Due to the students lack of activeness and confidence in the English language learning process, it was impossible to evaluate the process and results of teaching vocabulary in English.

A study of Sabata and Lagontang (2020) aimed to find the difficulties faced by the teachers in teaching vocabulary. This research was descriptive qualitative in nature. Data for this study were gathered through an interview. According to the findings, it is not ruled out that a teacher may be a problem for themselves. The challenges in teaching vocabulary originated from students and the lack of equipment at the school. Additionally, teachers faced a challenge due to the school's lack of response regarding the improvement of facilities and students' interest in learning English. As a result, efforts to improve teaching strategies have become a viable alternative and solution, especially when it comes to teaching vocabulary to ensure that the learning process is efficient.

A study of Sari and Wardani (2019) aimed to identify certain challenges faced by English teachers when teaching vocabulary and to come up with remedies. A semi-structured interview served as the instrument for the qualitative descriptive design that was used. The study demonstrated that common challenges in teaching vocabulary include students' and teachers' low vocabulary, as well as issues with methodologies, time constraints, and word choice. To get over these issues, vocabulary-teaching strategies include visual translation in a second language, real items, gestures, guessing from context, drilling, repetition, and using a dictionary may be used by teachers.

Material and methods

The current study follows the quantitative method approach by using closed- ended questionnaire to investigate the difficulties that teachers face in teaching vocabulary for young learners. The sample of the study consists of 50 teachers at Primary schools in Alkhoms city.

Limitation of the study

The study focuses on investigating the difficulties that English teachers face in teaching vocabulary learners at primary school in Alkhoms city. The study is conducted in two months in academic year 2025. This study may face some obstacles such as poor Internet connection and lack of paper and library references

Results and discussion

This chapter discusses and explains the results of the data analysis in the study that has been carried out in schools. In the discussion section, the researcher discusses the data gained from the questionnaire.

Results

The items of the questionnaires were analysed by calculating the frequency and percentage of the responses. Then the results were showed by using statistical tables to ease of understanding.

Participants' Gender

Table (1) shows the gender of the participants

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	10	20
female	40	80
Total	50	100

The table (1) shows that the majority of the teachers 80.0% were female teachers whereas just 20.0% of them were male teachers. The total number of the teachers were 50 (100.0%).

The difficulties in teaching vocabulary

Table (2) shows the results of first item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Do you face problems in teaching English vocabulary ?	34	68	16	32

the table (2) shows the results of first item in which the majority of the teachers 68.0% said that they face problems in teaching English vocabulary. On other hand, just 32.0% of them do not face any problem in teaching English vocabulary.

Table (3) shows the results of second item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
2	Do you use objects as visual aids?	34	68	16	32

The table (3) shows the results of second item in which the majority of the teachers 68.0% said they use objects as visual aids whereas 32.0 of the teachers said that they do not use these materials.

Table (4) shows the results of third item.

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
3	Do you use picture such as posters , flashcards or wall chart to make the meaning of unknown word clear?	22	44	28	56

The table (4) shows the results of third item in which more than half of the teachers 56.0% said they do not use pictures such as posters, flashcards or wall charts to make the meaning of unknown word clear whereas 44.0% of them said they use such technique to make the meaning of unknown word clear

Table (5) shows the results of fourth item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
4	Do you draw on the board to explain the meaning of a new word?	48	96	2	4

The table (5) shows the results of fourth item in which the majority of the teachers 96.0% said they draw on the board to explain the meaning of new word whereas just 4.0% of them does not do that.

Table (7) shows the results of fifth item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
5	Do you plain words to learn by giving them the opposite of word ?	38	76	12	24

The table (6) shows the results of fifth item in which the majority of the teachers 76.0% said that they plain words to learn by giving the students the opposite of words whereas 24.0% of them said that they do not do that

Table (7) shows the results of sixth item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
6	Do you use enumerated technique to explain difficult words ?	10	20	40	80

The table (7) shows the results of sixth item in which the majority of the teachers 80.0% said they do not use enumerated technique to explain difficult words. In contrast, just 20.0% of the teachers said that they use such technique.

Table (8) shows the results of seventh item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
7	Do you introduce unknown words by using body movement ?	38	76	12	24

The table (8) shows the results of seventh item in which the majority of the teachers 76.0% said they introduce unknown words by using body movement whereas as just 24.0% said that their do not.

Table (9) shows the results of eighth item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
8	Do you use any electronic devices such as computer , data show ,CD player etc.?	10	20	40	80

The table (9) shows the results of eighth item in which the majority of the teachers 80.0% said that they do not use any electronic devices such as computers, data show, CD player or other devices. On other hand, just 20.0% of teachers said that they use such devices in the classroom.

Table (10) shows the result of ninth item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
9	Do you activate your students to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words through context ?	48	96	2	4

The table (10) shows the results of ninth item in which 24 teachers 96,0% said that they activate the students to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words through context whereas just one teacher 4.0% said that he does not.

Table (7) shows the results of tenth item.

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
10	Do you just translate the meaning of new words in first language ?	48	96	2	4

The table (11) shows the results of tenth item in which the majority of the teachers 96.0% said they just translate the meaning of new words in first language whereas just one teacher 4,0% does not

Table (12) shows the results of eleventh item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
11	Do you give students a list of words to memorize ?	46	92	4	8

The table (12) shows the results of eleventh item in which the majority of the teachers 92.0% said they give the students a list of words to memorize them. In contrast, two teachers 8.0% said they do not.

Table (13) shows the results of twelfth item

no	Item	Yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
12	Do you face difficulty in telling students to memorize vocabulary ?	38	76	12	24

The table (13) shows the results of twelfth item, the majority of the teachers 76.0% said that they face difficulty in telling tur students to memorize vocabulary whereas just 24.0% said that they do not face any difficulty.

Table (14) shows the results of thirteenth item

no	Item	Yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
13	Do you face difficulty in teaching vocabulary because some students are lazy ?	46	92%	4	8%

The table (14) shows the results of thirteenth item in which the majority of the teachers 92.0% said that they face difficulty in teaching vocabulary because some students are lazy whereas just 8.0% of them said they do not face any difficulty.

Table (15) shows the results of fourteenth item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
14	Do you face difficulties in teaching vocabulary because of the lack of student activeness and confidences?	44	88%	16	12%

The table (15) shows the results of fourteenth Item in which the majority of the teachers 88.0% said that they face difficulties in teaching vocabulary because of the lack of student activeness and confidences whereas just 12.0% of them said they do not.

Table (16) shows the results of fifteenth item

no	Item	yes		No	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
15	Do you face difficulty in teaching vocabulary because of the time constraints of the class?	36	72%	14	28%

The table (16) shows that they majority of the teachers 72.0% said that they face difficulties in teaching vocabulary because of the time constraints of the class whereas just 28.0% of them said they do not.

Discussion

The results of this study are discussed based on the two research questions of the study. *"What are the difficulties that faced by English teachers in teaching vocabulary to young learners at Primary schools in Alkhoms city? And what are the reasons behind the difficulties that faced by English teachers in teaching vocabulary to young learners at Primary schools in Alkhoms city?"* However, the quantitative results of the questionnaires showed that the teachers face problems in teaching English vocabulary and they do not use effective strategies and techniques to aid the students to learn vocabulary, they do not use pictures such as posters, flashcards or wall charts to make the meaning of unknown words, they do not use enumerated technique to explain difficult words, and they do not use any electronic devices such computer, data show, CD player or other devices. They just translate the meaning of new words in Arabic, and give the students a list of words to memorize them The teachers face difficulty in telling their students to memorize vocabulary because some students are lazy and the students are not active and confident. Moreover, the teachers face difficulties in teaching vocabulary because of the time constraints of the class. These results are similar to many studies such as Astatia (2019) Sabata and Lagontang (2020), and Sari and Wardani (2019)

A study by Astatia (2019) found some of the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching vocabulary include: developing and choosing English materials that are relevant for the curriculum, and explaining words to students. These issues arise from a lack of engagement and confidence on the part of the students in the process of learning English. Additionally, Sabata and Lagontang (2020) discovered that teachers have difficulties when teaching vocabulary due to students and a lack of resources at the school, which does not completely rule out the potential of the teacher being a problem for themselves. Last but not least, a study by Sari and Wardani (2019) indicated that common challenges in teaching vocabulary are students and teachers' poor knowledge of the words, techniques, time constraints and word selection.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the difficulties that faced by English teachers in teaching vocabulary to young learners, and to find out the reasons behind the difficulties that faced by English teachers in teaching vocabulary to young learners at Primary schools in Alkhoms city. The quantitative approach was followed by applying the closed-ended questionnaire to 50 teachers at primary schools in Alkhoms city. It can be concluded that the teachers face problems in teaching English vocabulary, and they do not use effective strategies and techniques to aid the students to learn vocabulary; they do not use pictures such as posters, flashcards or wall charts to make the meaning of unknown word, they do not use enumerated technique to explain difficult words, and they do not use any electronic devices such as computers, data show, CD player or other devices. They just translate the meaning of new words in Arabic, and give the

students a list of words to memorize them. The teachers face difficulty in telling tur students to memorize vocabulary because some students are lazy and the students are not active and confident. Lazy students might prevent teachers from achieving their learning goals because they lack enthusiasm to learn, which causes students to learn less. Moreover, the teachers face difficulties in teaching vocabulary because of the time constraints of the class.

Recommendations and Suggestions

This study provides some recommendations and suggestions for the teachers and learners.

1. Teachers

Teachers have some difficulties when attempting to teach English vocabulary in context. Teachers should make an effort to address these issues by giving students direct instruction in English vocabulary or words by means of texts, providing learning of English words via repetition, teaching English words through context, using a variety of teaching strategies, and using a variety of teaching media.

2. learners

Learning English vocabulary is difficult, so students who wish to be proficient in it should never rely only on their teachers. They must seek out and attempt to pick up new language in other places, and they must always practice speaking English correctly.

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Appendixes Questionnaire

Dear teacher

The purpose of the questionnaire is to get data about difficulties you face when teaching vocabulary to young learners' primary school. Hopefully, read the items carefully and give the response on each item by putting a tick mark in column you choose.

Gender: male female

No	Item	Yes	No	Any details
1	Do you face problems in teaching English vocabulary?			
2	Do you use objects as visual aid			
3	Do you use pictures such as posters, flashcards or wall charts to make the meaning of unknown clear?			
4	Do you draw on the board to explain the meaning of a new word?			
5	Do you plain words to learn by give them the opposite of word?			
6	Do you use enumerated technique to explain difficult words?			
7	Do you introduce unknown words by using body movement?			
8	Do you use any electronic devices such as computers, data show, CD player etc.?			
9	Do you activate your students to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words through context?			
10	Do you just translate the meaning of new words in first language?			
11	Do you give students a list of words to memorize?			
12	Do you face difficulty in telling students to memorize vocabulary?			
13	Do you face difficulty in teaching vocabulary because some students are lazy?			
14	Do you face difficulties in teaching vocabulary because of the lack of student activeness and confidences?			
15	Do you face difficulty in teaching vocabulary because of the time constraints of the class?			

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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